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VIOLIN CLASS WORK IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF ILLINOIS

BY

BELLE LONGBONS

THESIS

FOR THE

DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF MUSIC

IN

MUSIC

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

1922

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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

June 9 1922

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

Belle Longbons

ENTITLED VIOLIN CLASS WORK IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF

ILLINOIS

IS APPROVED BY ME AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF Bachelor of Music in Music

George Foss Schwartz

Instructor in Charge

APPROVED:

F. B. Stiven

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF

School of Music

Violin Class Work
in the
Public Schools of Illinois



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Within the last decade, no phase of music has received such a sudden impetus as the teaching of instrumental music in the public schools. This is perhaps due in a large measure to the development of the Symphony Orchestra. Many of the members of these organizations obtained their knowledge in European conservatories, having begun their musical education at a very early age. Our own young people suffer in comparison with these talented and accomplished foreigners, not because of less ability but because of lack of their advantages. Given an equal chance in the study of music, American children may become performers, quite as skillful musicians, just as proficient as those of foreign lands. As yet, the instrumental program of the schools is in what may be termed its experimental stage. However, enough work in this line has been done to show that, with a normal expenditure of time, money and energy, it may be successful.

There are two ways in which instrumental music is taught in the public school systems, namely, the class instruction method and the courses in applied music. In the latter, the pupil takes lessons from a private teacher who is recognized by the school supervisor as being qualified to do his work acceptably. The course to be pursued should be outlined clearly and a definite amount of work demanded. The pupil must take at least one lesson a week and practise one hour or more daily. At the end of the semester he is examined, preferably by a musician who is in no wise connected with the musical life of the community. In class instruction, as the name indicates,

pupils are taught together as a class, receiving more or less individual instruction. In some classes, each child receives a short lesson of ten minutes or less. Usually, from five to ten are taught in one class. The length of the period is from forty-five to fifty minutes. Classes meet either once or twice a week. Perhaps this movement of doing class work originated in methods pursued in conservatories in European countries.

Dr. Albert G. Mitchell, now of the Boston city schools, conceived the idea of giving class instruction to school children in the United States. He has written Mitchell's "Violin Class Method." According to reports he has been very successful in his work. Others who have done much with instrumental music in the schools of the United States are D. E. Mattern, A. B., Director of instrumental music of Public Schools at Ithaca, New York, Paul Stoeving in New York City, Joseph E. Maddy, Richmond, Indiana, and Carl F. Steckelberg, Bancroft School, Lincoln, Nebraska.

It has been found that the violin is more successfully taught in classes than any other instrument. In England, the teaching of the violin is better organized and consequently more systematic than in the United States. Paul Stoeving, now of New York City, has spent several years in violin class instruction in London, England. Fifteen years ago violin classes were organized into a national union of school orchestras, under a central committee of management, and sponsored by the members of the nobility. The teaching material was standardized.

From eight to twenty-five children are taught in one class, the pupils paying ten cents per lesson. Every year a great festival is held at the Crystal Palace in London. Representatives are sent out to examine the pupils and to decide upon those who are to compete in the festival. A small admission fee is charged which covers all expenses, including scholarships. In the year nineteen hundred and nineteen, it was estimated that five hundred thousand pupils received their violin instruction in the schools.

The state of Illinois is not behind other states and parts of the country in the teaching of violin by the class method. A questionnaire sent to the different schools of the state has brought replies from eighty supervisors and teachers of violin. According to statistics thus acquired there are twenty-five towns or cities in which violin class instruction is offered either in the High School or Grammar School, sometimes both. Approximately thirteen hundred children take advantage of the opportunity thus offered. In twelve schools, the children receive the instruction free of charge, the Board of Education paying for the lessons either by a stipulated salary or by a certain amount of money for so many lessons. Salaries of the violin instructors range from twenty-five dollars to one hundred fifty dollars per month. In the remaining schools, pupils pay for instruction, the price being fifteen, twenty-five, forty-five or fifty cents per lesson. Instruments are furnished by the schools and loaned to the pupils in four schools. The pupils furnish their own instruments in the

remaining places. Pupils receive credit for the work done in three schools. In four places the pupils pass an examination on general musical knowledge. A test is also given to determine natural ability or ear for music. All the schools have orchestras, the members of the string section being selected from the best ones in the classes. Cicero, a suburb of Chicago, has two hundred fifty enrolled in the classes, the largest enrollment in one place.

The following instruction books are used by the different violin instructors:- Mitchell's Class Method for Violin, Greenberg's Elementary Method; Berold's Primer, Hohman Mortimer Wilson's Fiddler's Four, First Steps for Ensemble Players by Bornschein, Violin Choirs by Fretsche and Saenger, Dancla's Beginners, Bang's Violin Method, Hersey Method, Leopold Auer's Book for Beginners, Municipal Loose Leaf Method by Fred Ortmann.

The schools in the southern part of the state which offer class instruction in violin are Herrin, Harrisburg, Eldorado, and East St. Louis. Herrin leads in the amount of teaching done. A special violin teacher is employed by the Board of Education, at a salary of one hundred twenty-five dollars per month, who puts in full time teaching. Pupils from the fourth to the eighth grades inclusive are allowed to enroll in the classes, provided they own their instruments. A total of one hundred seventy-nine are enrolled in the classes. The classes meet twice a week during school hours for a period of forty-five minutes. The pupils play the lesson together and individual instruction is given to those who need it. After

a class has been going on for some time the more talented are separated from the less talented. The pupil receives no credit for the work, but a grade is put on the report card at the end of every month. The instructor often gives extra help to the pupils as she sees fit or as they desire it. The violin classes furnish the violinists for the orchestra. Thus the pupils have something to work for. Every year a concert is given by the grammar school pupils, the advanced and beginning classes taking part on the program. The supervisor has been very successful in her orchestra work. She attributes her success to the free instruction given in the grade schools. No class instruction is offered in the High School. The instructor of music in the High School says, "Of the forty pieces we now have in the orchestra, eighty-five percent of the children have had some class lessons in violin which proves to me the advisability of adopting the violin as the beginner's instrument. The strict disciplinary coordination required in violin playing makes the mastery of other instruments easy."

At Harrisburg, a city of ten thousand population, one hundred thirty-six pupils are taking violin lessons in the classes. Pupils from the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades are admitted to the class. A child may enter the class without an examination of any sort. The pupils furnish their own violins. Classes of twelve members meet once a week. Every child receives individual instruction during the period and some ensemble work is done. The system of promotion does not follow the regular plan used for their other studies, being more flexible. The pupils are graded, the grade appearing on

the report card but this grade is not counted in on the average. This work has been offered to the pupils for seven years. The supervisor teaches two of the classes and a special teacher has one class every day after school and four on Saturdays.

One year ago plans were made by the members of the Board of Education and the superintendent of Eldorado, a town of six thousand people, to employ a special violin instructor in the grammar schools. This was done and one hundred four enrolled in the classes. Pupils from the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades take lessons. The classes meet once a week during school hours. Not over eight pupils are taught in one class. One hour is spent with every class. During this period, each pupil plays the assignment for the instructor. The attention of each individual is directed towards the particular difficulty he experiences. Very little class instruction is given but as progress is made, ensemble work is done, duets, trios, etc., being used. The pupils get the lessons free of charge.

The class instruction in violin is comparatively new at East St. Louis, yet both grade school and High School pupils are permitted to take lessons. Class instruction is not limited to certain grades. However, a student may not enter the class unless he has a permit from the supervisor. All pupils furnish their instruments. Fifty-five take advantage of the free instruction in violin. Classes meet once a week during school hours in the afternoons. From ten to twenty are enrolled in one class. During the class period which lasts sixty minutes, the pupils receive some individual instruction,

but for the most part they are taught together as a group. The pupils do not receive credit for violin work but in the near future a credit system is to be worked out. The best players in the violin classes make up the violin section in the orchestra. The pupils know this and consider it a great honor to become a member of the orchestra.

In the central part of Illinois, violin classes are a part of the curriculum in the following schools, Lincoln, Springfield, Taylorville, and Henry. The violin instruction has been offered to Grammar School pupils at Lincoln, Illinois, for three years. Only pupils from the seventh and eighth grades are eligible for class work. Six pupils participate in one class and as a rule, they play the lesson assignment together. When necessary a pupil receives individual instruction. If the instructor discovers a pupil who can progress faster than the class, he advises the pupil to discontinue the class work and take private lessons. Others who cannot keep up with the class drop out sometimes taking privately. Here the children in the poorer district receive free instruction but in the other district they pay a small fee of twenty-five cents per lesson.

There are one hundred fifty pupils from the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth grades taking class lessons at Springfield. There are no entrance requirements into the classes. As a rule the pupils own their violins. The school loans instruments to those who really seem interested and cannot afford to buy them. There are never more than five pupils in a class, occasionally a smaller number. The classes

meet twice a week during school hours, after and before school. The instructor spends thirty minutes with every class, teaching the pupils as a group and giving some individual instruction. Springfield has three violin instructors who are paid by the pupils, each one paying twenty-five cents per lesson. No credit is given in violin but the best players are selected to play in the orchestra.

At Taylorville the School Board has employed a violin instructor from Springfield to come once a week to instruct the pupils in the art of violin playing. Pupils in the grammar schools and High School may enter the classes. The school does not furnish pupils with instruments. Thirty pupils are given instruction. The number in any one class does not exceed five. Sixty minutes is devoted to every class. The pupils receive individual instruction of short periods. While one pupil is playing the assignment, the others observe. Ensemble work is taken up at a later time. Each child pays the instructor forty cents a lesson.

The system of class instruction is far from being perfect at Henry, Illinois, according to the supervisor of grade music. After her program was made out this year, there were two forty-five minute periods vacant on two days of the week. Being a violinist and qualified to teach, she started two violin classes. Any pupils from the four upper grades may take lessons free of charge. No entrance examinations are required and no system of credits is used other than the ordinary grade on the report cards to show the parents just what they can do. The total enrollment of the class is twenty-seven, nine in one

class, eighteen in the other.

In the northern portion of the state excluding Chicago and suburbs, class instruction in violin is offered in schools at Peru, Elgin, West Aurora, Moline, Galesburg, Monmouth, Rockford, DeKalb, and Rock Island. At Peru the supervisor of music in the graded schools has two classes of violin students. Any pupil above the fourth grade who wishes to take lessons and who has a violin may be a member of the class. There are fifteen pupils taking lessons. The classes meet once a week after school for forty minutes. Instruction is given to the class as a whole. No credit is given for the work but the pupils are graded so that parents may know just what their children are doing. One year of violin is taught.

Classes in violin have been organized in the Elgin Grammar Schools for two years. Pupils from the fourth to the eighth grade inclusive are allowed to enter the classes without examination provided they furnish their instruments and pay a small fee of fifteen cents per lesson. Fifty are taught violin, not less than four or more than eight pupils being in one class. The classes meet after school for one hour twice a week. Pupils receive individual instruction during the class period if necessary. A system of promotion is being worked out, but as yet nothing definite has been done. As in the Peru schools, the children usually take one year of class lessons, going to private teachers at the end of that time.

The classes in violin have been very successful in the graded schools of West Aurora according to the supervisor. High School classes are in the process of formation. Class

instruction is limited to the five upper grades in the grammar schools. Examinations are given to the pupils before they are allowed to enter the classes. A pupil must have a good musical ear and some general knowledge of music, such as the names of the lines and spaces on the staff, key signatures, time values, etc. The total enrollment of the classes is twenty-five, from six to eight being taught in one class. The classes meet once a week for an hour during which time the children play the lesson together, receiving some individual instruction. Only two years of violin are taught, as pupils then take private lessons. In the near future credit is to be given in violin.

The School Board at Moline was short on funds this year so the class instruction in violin had to be discontinued. Last year violin instruction was offered in the grammar schools and in the High School. The classes met after school once a week and were instructed as a group rather than individually. Pupils paid twenty-five cents for one lesson. It is the plan of the supervisor to start violin classes again next year, (1922-23).

At Galesburg the plan of violin class instruction is very similar to that of Aurora with the exception of the fact that there are no requirements to be filled for entrance into the violin classes. After two years of class work the pupils take private lessons.

The violin work has just been started this year at Monmouth, Illinois, so, many of the details remain to be worked out. Already fifty pupils are enrolled in the classes, eight

or ten being in one class. The pupils furnish their own instruments. Later the school may purchase a few violins to loan to pupils who cannot buy instruments. Classes meet twice per week after school and on Saturdays. The instructor spends thirty minutes with every class. He is paid by the pupils who get ten lessons for two dollars and fifty cents.

Violin work is offered in the grammar schools at Rockford and some plans have been made to include it in the High School curriculum. Class instruction is limited to certain grades,-- fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth. An examination is given to every pupil before he enters the class. If the pupil is a beginner, his examination consists only in the testing of his musical ear. If he has had lessons elsewhere, an examination of general musical knowledge such as, the rudiments of theory, reading ability, etc., is added to the ear-testings. On the whole the pupils have their violins but the school owns a few and loans them to those children whose parents are unable to buy instruments. If the pupils to whom the instruments are loaned do not do well in their work, the violins are taken from them and given to those whose names are on the waiting list. Seventy-five pupils are enrolled in the classes. Groups of eight meet once a week, some during school hours, others after school and on Saturdays. Ordinarily the pupils take class lessons for a year or more and then branch out into private lessons.

At Rock Island classes are conducted in much the same way as in Rockford. There are a few slight differences. First, the school does not own any violins; second, classes meet only

during school hours; and third, as this is only the second year for violin work, there are only sixteen who are taking class lessons. Many of those who were in classes last year, are now studying from private teachers.

The High School music instructor has the violin classes in the DeKalb High School. Two restrictions are placed upon students wishing to enter the class. They must pass an entrance examination of physical adaptability and of the musical ear. They must have passing grades in all other subjects that they are taking. Students usually furnish their own violins but the school owns a few instruments and loans them to students who feel they cannot buy. Violin work is put on the same basis as any music subject. Classes meet five times per week the last two periods in the afternoon. Two hours of daily preparation is required of every student. They receive two and one-half credits a semester. (The High School runs on a basis of thirty-two credits for graduation.) The total enrollment is nineteen. The pupils do not pay for the lessons. This is the first year of class instruction and under the present organization has proven very successful.

The remaining schools which offer violin instruction are Waukegan, New Trier, Maywood, and Bowen High Schools, the Cicero, Wilmette, and Winnetka grammar schools. At Wilmette the majority of the violin pupils are from the fifth and sixth grades, though class instruction is not limited to certain grades. The total enrollment is seventeen, five in the advanced class and six in each beginner's class. Classes meet once a week, before and after school and on Saturdays.

The lessons cost the pupils more than in most places. They pay five dollars in advance for ten lessons. The same violin instructor started classes in January in the grammar schools at Winnetka, which are held at ten, eleven, and twelve o'clock during the week. Wilmette High School students attend the New Trier High School where they receive violin instruction.

The Cicero schools have a total of two hundred fifty violin pupils, the largest number taking class lessons in any one city in the state. As in the Rockford schools pupils take entrance examinations before being admitted into the classes. The Board of Education furnishes no instruments but does pay the instructor, the pupils getting the lessons free. From thirty to forty minutes are spent with every class. During the first half of the period, pupils receive individual attention, while the latter part of the hour is spent in ensemble playing. Classes meet once per week.

The director of music in the Township High School at Maywood has charge of the violin classes. Lessons are given twice a week during school hours. There are ten in the classes and from two to four are taught in one class. Pupils furnish their violins but pay nothing for their lessons, the director instructing the classes as a part of his regular music work.

At Bowen High School, Chicago, though the number of violin students is small, credit is given for the work. Pupils taking two lessons a week and doing the work required are given one-half credit a semester on a basis of sixteen credits for graduation. A student must have a good ear for music before he is admitted into a class. Classes are taught by the

director.

The above statement also applies to the New Trier High School. As yet no credit is given for work done in violin. Any pupil may take class lessons if he has his own instrument, but if the instructor finds a student who is not musical she advises him to drop the work. The classes are small, meeting only once a week. At first only individual instruction is given, but after a month or so ensemble work is done.

The violin work in the High School at Waukegan seems to be well organized, more so than in the majority of the schools in the state. Any student may take advantage of class lessons but if he shows no talent he cannot remain in the class. The violin classes meet the same as any other subject requiring preparation. Below is a program offered by the music department.

<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>DAYS</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>PERIODS</u>	<u>REQUIRING</u>	<u>CREDIT</u>
	<u>WEEK</u>			<u>PREPARATION</u>	<u>UNIT</u>
History of Music	5	3/4	1 3/4	Yes	1
Harmony	5		1	Yes	1
Clarinet	5		1	Yes	1
Violin	5		1	Yes	1
Violin	5		1	Yes	1
Chorus	3		1	No	1/2
Orchestra	2		2	No	1/2
Band	2		2	No	1/2

Students are required to practise one hour a day six days in the week. A practise card is given to every student in order that the instructor will have a record of the time spent in home practise.

RECORD OF TIME SPENT IN HOME PRACTICE

TIME REQUIRED:

1 hour per day (6 days) violin, 'cello, piano, flute, clarinet.
 3/4 hours per day (6 days) viola, oboe, cornet, French horn,
 trombone.
 1/2 hour per day (6 days) bass, bassoon, tuba, trap-drum,
 bells.

"A serious student of music will do no less."

DAY	1st Wk. Hr..Min..	2nd Wk. Hr..Min..	3rd Wk. Hr..Min..	4th Wk. Hr..Min..	5th Wk. Hr..Min..	6th Wk. Hr..Min..
MONDAY	:	:	:	:	:	:
TUESDAY	:	:	:	:	:	:
WEDNESDAY	:	:	:	:	:	:
THURSDAY	:	:	:	:	:	:
FRIDAY	:	:	:	:	:	:
SATURDAY	:	:	:	:	:	:

To my knowledge the above is a correct statement of the time this student has spent in practice and time of practice has been marked upon this report DAILY.

Signed _____ Parent

NOTICE: This report must be filled out and promptly filed with the Supervisor of Music at the end of each period (6 weeks) if you wish credit for work done.

From the answers received from the questionnaire one can readily see that there is room for improvement in the violin classes in the state. Perhaps one of the most important problems in the teaching of violin is that of securing capable teachers, those who really know their work. The instructors should be familiar with public school methods. It would appear

that there are instructors teaching classes in violin who know very little about the instrument.

Then comes the problem of musical instruments and equipment. The pupils should be encouraged to purchase good instruments. The instructor might help in the selection of violins for to many of the parents all violins are alike. Of course this would be a difficult task especially if the enrollment is very large. Cheap instruments are usually poorly made and the tone is abominable. A pupil who begins on an instrument having a flat fingerboard, a short neck, strings too far apart or any other serious imperfection, will find it difficult to play on a good instrument. The matter of proper equipment is also very important. A teacher could spend an entire class period in fixing slipping pegs, falling bridges, in putting on strings, etc. It would be a good idea for each pupil to have a printed list of requirements as to equipment. None should be allowed to enter the class until he has attended to every little detail. The instructor should impress upon the pupils' minds the importance of keeping instruments clean and in good condition. Each should be held responsible for the condition of his violin. Implicit obedience to this rule should be required. Firm discipline must be enforced or the work will be unsatisfactory, no matter how talented the students or how able the instructor.

If the Board of Education can possibly find enough money to buy a few violins, they should do so. More older people would be playing some musical instrument to-day had they been taught during the impressionable age. The schools should use

discretion in loaning instruments. Pupils who are unable to buy and who show interest and some gift for playing should be provided with violins.

Again violin class work will be made more successful if the instructors have the co-operation of the parents. Practise sheets such as the music department in the Waukegan High School send out would aid in gaining co-operation. No pupil should be allowed to enter a violin class unless he has taken an entrance examination. At least his musical ear should be tested. The classes should not be large and should meet at least twice per week. If possible, credit should be given for work done in violin.

Lastly, the work must be so outlined that it will fit in with the regular public school music so that the music taught in the school-room will serve as a background for the violin work. It would seem that the teaching material might be standardized in Illinois, following England as an example. The instructors in violin from all over the state might get together and plan a course of study. A system of scholarships and competition could be worked out. An "Annual Festival" could be held having competitions between the different schools of the state. This sounds idealistic, yet such a plan might be carried out. Why not? It is done in basket-ball with the wildest enthusiasm.

Many people have the wrong idea concerning violin classes. They do not appear to understand why the violin is taught in classes, contending the pupil advances much more rapidly with private lessons than with class work. But private instruction

is not possible for the majority of school children. They cannot afford expensive lessons. Classes in violin (1) create an appreciation on the part of the students for the instrument and gives them an understanding of the music associated with it, (2) provide a musical instrument in the home, (3) furnish material for the school orchestra.

Classes are organized to teach the elementary steps in a thorough manner enabling the pupil to receive the proper foundation for future study. When pupils are discovered who have extraordinary talent for the violin, they are encouraged to develop this hitherto unsuspected gift. They are recommended to take up the work with a private teacher. The average student should study privately when he has reached a certain stage. As Christian Sinding has said, "The greatest musical development of a country will come when the masses are thoroughly in accord with good music and what it should stand for in the life of every man and woman."

Not every one may become an expert performer, nor is every one given that quality of perception which results in interpretation. But if the proper training has been given everybody may have the ability to be an appreciative listener to good music.

Schools that offer Class Instruction on the Violin

Southern Illinois

Herrin	Eldorado
Harrisburg	East Saint Louis

Central Illinois

Lincoln	Taylorville
Springfield	Henry

Northern Illinois

Peru	DeKalb
Elgin	Rock Island
West Aurora	Moline
Galesburg	Monmouth
Rockford	Maywood
New Trier	Bowen
Waukegan	Cicero
Wilmette	Winnetka

Schools that offer Free Instruction

Herrin	Peru
Eldorado	DeKalb
Lincoln	Bowen
Henry	Maywood
Harrisburg	East Saint Louis
Waukegan	New Trier

Schools that Furnish Instruments and Loan Them to Pupils

DeKalb

Springfield

Rockford

Bowen

Schools that Require Pupils to Pass an Examination
before Entering Classes

Rockford

DeKalb

Rock Island

West Aurora

Schools that Give Credit for Violin Work

Waukegan

DeKalb

Bowen

Class Periods

	School hours	After school	Once per week	Twice per week	Five times per week
Herrin	x			x	
Harrisburg		x	x		
Eldorado	x		x		
East Saint Louis	x		x		
Lincoln	x	x	x		
Springfield	x	x	x		
Taylorville	x	x	x		
Henry	x		x		
Peru		x	x		
Elgin		x	x		
West Aurora	x		x		
Galesburg		x		x	
Rockford	x	x	x		
New Trier	x		x		
Waukegan	x				x
Wilmette		x	x		
DeKalb		x			x
Rock Island	x		x		
Moline		x	x		
Monmouth	x	x			
Maywood	x				x
Bowen	x			x	

Total Enrollment of Violin Classes

Herrin	179
Harrisburg	136
Eldorado	104
East Saint Louis	55
Springfield	150
Taylorville	30
Henry	27
Elgin	50
West Aurora	25
Galesburg	29
Monmouth	50
Rockford	75
Rock Island	16
DeKalb	19
Wilmette	17
Cicero	250
Maywood	10
Bowen High	16
Waukegan	33
Peru	<u>15</u>
Total	1306

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